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TAGS: [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [MK](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: PLANS FOR IRAQ FOR 2008 AND BEYOND  
(C-RE8-00009)

REF: A. STATE 2310

[1](#)B. SKOPJE 812

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASON 1.4 (C).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) The following responses are keyed to the questions in ref A:

[1](#)A. (S/NF) Macedonia's leadership is committed to staying the course in Iraq in 2008 and beyond, as long as the U.S. remains engaged in Iraq and indicates Macedonian support is needed. Macedonia recently doubled its troop deployments, to 77 soldiers, to support U.S.-led operations in Iraq. The parliament must authorize each six-month rotation of troops to Iraq, and continues to do unanimously.

[1](#)B. Macedonia plans to maintain its military presence in Iraq through 2008 and as long as needed thereafter.

[1](#)C. Macedonia currently has 41 special forces and 36 mechanized infantry troops serving in Iraq. Those troops conduct joint patrols and other missions with U.S. forces, and provide facility security for coalition headquarters in Taji.

[1](#)D. Macedonia, a foreign aid recipient and a poor country with 2006 per capita GDP of \$3,042, currently has no plans to provide economic assistance or other non-military contributions to Iraq in 2008 or thereafter. According to government figures, Iraqi debt outstanding to private Macedonian firms for work done prior to the second Gulf war is over \$280 million.

[1](#)E. The Ministry of Defense and other government officials continue to appreciate USG funding of all non-salary expenses for Macedonian troops serving in Iraq. Any U.S. incentive program that would provide full or partial reimbursement for salary costs for those Macedonian troops serving in Iraq (currently amounting to approximately \$3.2 million, or roughly two percent of the MOD's annual budget) would help reinforce the GOM's commitment to continued troop deployments in Iraq.

[1](#)F. In the absence of an authorizing UNSCR for continued

deployment in Iraq, the Macedonians have indicated they would require a bilateral agreement with the Iraqi government to provide the legal basis for future troop deployments. Some GOM officials have indicated it would be useful for the Iraqi government to develop a standard bilateral agreement for use with all smaller troop-contributing countries.

¶G. There are no plans for national or local elections in Macedonia in 2008, though there is speculation that the Prime Minister will call for early parliamentary elections later this year. The next regularly scheduled elections will be local and presidential elections to be held in 2009. None of these elections should affect Macedonia's commitment to continuing its support for U.S. operations in Iraq.

¶H. Given resource limitations, the GOM has not looked for ways to become more involved in Iraq apart from its current troop contributions.

¶I. Macedonia's leadership views the country's interests in Iraq as: 1.) supporting democratic developments abroad and demonstrating Macedonia's transition from a security consumer to a security provider; 2.) demonstrating the capabilities of its troops, which have served with distinction alongside U.S. troops, and showing its commitment to the U.S. as a partner in the War on Terror; and 3.) gaining valuable training for its military forces as it prepares for a possible NATO invitation at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008.

¶J. Macedonian leaders have shown strong interest in pursuing contract opportunities in Iraq in the construction sector, given the earlier history of Macedonian construction firms' participation in infrastructure projects in Iraq prior to the second Gulf War. Macedonian citizens currently are employed by U.S.-based contractors in logistics support functions in Iraq.

¶K. Both funding and personnel shortages will limit Macedonia's ability to engage more robustly in Iraq.

¶L. Macedonia defense and foreign affairs officials view the security situation in Iraq as critical but improving. They believe the situation will continue to improve as long as there is a firm commitment by the U.S. and its allies to staying the course and concentrating forces in the highest-risk areas of the country.

¶M. Even if the threat situation in Iraq were to improve significantly, it is unlikely that the Macedonian government would consider any major increase in its involvement there. A permissive security environment, especially in Baghdad, would, however, likely cause the Macedonian MFA to move ahead with its previously shelved (in 2005) plan to open a diplomatic mission there.

¶N. Regardless of the improvement in the security situation, the Macedonians likely will remain engaged in Iraq as long as the U.S. and the Iraqi government indicate they are needed.

¶O. As indicated in K. and H. above, the GOM does not currently plan to provide economic/humanitarian aid to Iraq.

¶P. Post is not aware of any upcoming European meetings involving Macedonian participation that would lead to impetus for increased involvement in Iraq.

¶Q. The government has taken the lead in informing public opinion on the reasons for Macedonia's participation in Iraq. The Minister of Defense has been a strong advocate for the government's current position on participation. There are few public debates on the topic, little editorial comment on Macedonia's participation, and the media tend not to cover Iraq issues in more than cursory detail.

¶R. Not applicable to Macedonia.  
MILOVANOVIC